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ABSTRACT

Consistent with education reform efforts, the U.S. Department of Education, in November 1993, invited a group of 119 outstanding public and private school teachers to the Goals 2000 Teacher Forum in Washington, D.C. to hear their thoughts and explore ways in which the federal government might work in partnership with teachers to achieve the National Education Goals. The forum dealt with the following topics: how all American children may achieve success in the classroom; the kinds of systemic changes needed so that all students are challenged to meet higher expectations; and what policymakers and society as a whole must pledge so that this educational system is competitive in today's global society. Informants' suggestions formed the basis for the following concrete recommendations: teachers must be included in the decision-making process; the education system must be reshaped to reflect high-level thinking and substantive academic rigor; policymakers at all levels must ensure adequate funding for education; teachers must be given time to be professional educators; and teacher preparation and staff development must be overhauled to help teachers meet the needs of today's students. A list of forum participants is included. (LL)

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HONOR WHAT WE KNOW. LISTEN TO WHAT WE SAY.

Voices from the Goals 2000 Teacher Forum

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HONOR WHAT WE KNOW. LISTEN TO WHAT WE SAY.

Voices from the Goals 2000 Teacher Forum

November 1993

U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

Richard W. Riley
Secretary

FOREWORD

As the Clinton Administration strives to promote education excellence and nationwide school reform, we have formed a partnership with teachers. If our mission to build a high-performance education system for the 21st century is to be successful, it is critical that we tap the knowledge, experience, and insight that teachers have gained as classroom practitioners.

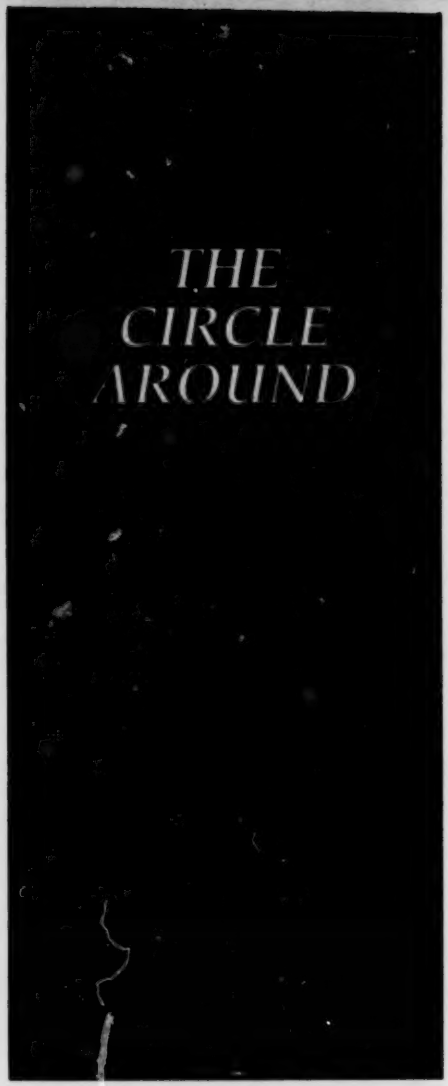
With this goal in mind, the U.S. Department of Education invited a group of 119 exceptional public and private school teachers to Washington in November 1993 to hear their thoughts and to explore ways in which the federal government can work with educators to achieve the National Education Goals. Each 1993 State Teacher of the Year was invited to attend and to bring a partner based on guidelines developed to ensure diverse representation. Private school organizations also nominated teachers to attend the gathering. This historic event—the Goals 2000 Teacher Forum—was a great success. It provided an informative and candid exchange, concrete recommendations, and some innovative ideas and solutions based on the participants' vast experience. This report shares some of the many voices from the Forum.

But the 1993 Goals 2000 Teacher Forum is just the beginning. The dialogue between teachers and the Department must be an ongoing one, so that there is a continuous exchange of information as the Administration develops and implements policy proposals. By laying a foundation for teachers to become partners in developing state and local reform plans, we are helping to enable them to lead changes in their schools and communities. We hope through this initiative to shift the focus from teachers as **objects** of reform to teachers as **partners** in reform.

I hope that you enjoy reading about this exciting venture.

Dick Riley

Richard W. Riley



They came to Washington, D.C. from as far away as Alaska and Guam and Puerto Rico. They came from small towns of the Midwest, large cities in the East, bayous of the South, and the suburbs of the West Coast.

They arrived in pairs. Teachers. Teachers of five-year-olds, nine-year-olds, twelve-year-olds, seventeen-year-olds. Teachers of the handicapped and the gifted. Teachers from public and private schools whose combined experience was well over a thousand years. Teachers of the Year. Christa McAuliffe Fellows. Presidential Math and Science Awardees. Hard workers. Professionals. Dedicated.

But they didn't come to be honored this time. They came to be heard. These teachers came at the invitation of Secretary of Education Richard Riley who asked them to let their voices be heard, voices which would meld into a synergistic symphony. This document is their song.

Their prompt? The National Education Goals. These goals were formulated in 1989 by the nation's governors under then-President Bush when it became apparent that the United States might lose its foothold in the global community. Our nation's schools could no longer compete with the educational systems of other nations. Higher expectations for students in terms of content and assessments were needed if the United States were to reclaim its tradition of excellence. The goals were written to help reform an educational system developed in the late 1800s around the only working model available—an industrial one.

The goals are visionary—the work to implement them, difficult. It is for this reason that Richard Riley invited teachers to let their concerns, hopes, frustrations, ideas, and dreams be known to federal officials. The people that will ultimately make the changes necessary, that will lead the way to establishing an educational system unrivaled in the world are the nation's teachers. Teachers will turn these ambitious goals into classroom realities.

The Goals 2000 Teacher Forum, held in November 1993, was a start in giving teachers a voice in educational leadership and the impetus to become change-agents for this country. The Forum teachers started by facing challenging questions. How can all American children achieve success in the classroom? What kind of systemic changes are needed so that all students are challenged by and meet higher expectations? What must policy makers and society as a whole pledge so that this educational system is competitive in today's global society?

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Then they set about the task of answering those questions. What they found was that although their experiences were as varied as material on a patchwork quilt, their ideals and frustrations were as consistent as the pattern. Together they found and formed a voice.

To increase America's competitive position in the world, to return our nation's schools to their rightful place of prominence among all countries, and to revitalize American schools, society must make a commitment to children as our number one priority.

The Forum teachers had much to say about how we, as a nation, need to rethink our educational system. With passion and a sense of urgency, the Forum teachers made the following recommendations:

- teachers must be included in any decision-making process that affects them and their students;
- the education system must be reshaped from that of a factory paradigm to one which reflects high-level thinking, substantive academic rigor, and the skills necessary to make our students competitive in this fast-changing world;
- policy makers at all levels must ensure adequate, equitable and stable funding for education;
- teachers must be given adequate time to be professional educators; and
- teacher preparation programs and staff development must be overhauled to help teachers meet the needs of today's students.

If they said it once, they said it a thousand times in many different ways. "We need help." Not just from the top down, but from the circle around. From policy makers, parents, politicians, business people, community leaders, colleagues and the students themselves. "It is time," one teacher wrote, "we acknowledge that this job of educating our nation's children is the most important job a person can be given." Said another, "We can't do it alone. Parents, students, districts, state departments and the nation's government must work together to preserve our most precious national resource—our children."

Their plea was universal. Honor what we know. Listen to what we say.

The educators who gathered in Washington are recognized as outstanding teachers. They have published, run workshops, given speeches, made presentations, and organized reform efforts in their own districts and regions. Yet, they feel their leadership and influence is limited or, more directly, undervalued.

Another told this story. "I was invited to talk with legislators about state funding. I was excited that I was being asked for my opinion on something that would affect me and my students personally. Then I was told I had to be at the state capitol at 9:00 the next morning. It was either leave my house at 4:00 a.m. and drive several hours, or pay my own airline and taxi fees."

"We have a perspective you can't get from anyone else."

They believe a mind-set exists that suggests that a teacher's input is only valuable when it has to do with what goes on in his or her particular class. "As a teacher of the year, I was honored and given plaques and parties. But when my year was up, that was it. Why wasn't I asked for my perspectives, advice, recommendations?" one former teacher of the year questioned. She likened it to a doctor trying to help a patient and never asking him where it hurts.

Even when teachers are asked to participate in policy decisions, they often feel relegated to the back row early in the process. "They appoint a teacher to a committee, then set a meeting for 11:00 a.m., meaning your kids have to be split up among classes, so you say 'no thanks'," said one frustrated teacher.

Stung by "silver bullet" reforms that come and go without adequate support, even reform-minded teachers retreat behind classroom doors "to protect their integrity," as one teacher put it.

It is obvious that teachers want to be valued for what they know. But unfortunately, three-fourths of these teachers have not had direct contact with education policy makers in their states. One-fourth know nothing or very little about the National Education Goals and the efforts to establish national content standards. Less than four percent know a great deal about either the goals or standard-setting. They are equally uninvolved in the activities of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, even though the Forum participants would be the most likely to be among the first to apply for Board Certification.

"It is not for lack of desire that I don't know these things," wrote a junior high teacher. "There are just not enough hours in a day. I face 150 students from 8:00 till 3:00. I go home with two to three hours of work a night."

An elementary teacher added, "I want systemic change in the way the day is structured. It is the only way I can be involved in the bigger picture."

Forum teachers strongly concur. In fact, their need for time to become more competent professionals and to become active in school reform was one of the strongest Forum affirmations.

Frustrated but determined, the Forum teachers are ready to act on their expertise and skill. However, they feel almost as ineffective at state and national levels as they assume their fellow teachers to be. "A real teacher-of-the-year honor," said another, "is not the plaque and the publicity. It's knowing that my expertise will be used to improve education. Now THAT tells me I am valuable." Another adds, "Use us as resources and sounding boards. We have a perspective you can't get from anyone else."

In order to help all young people achieve at high levels we need to "make it work outside the school walls." "I used to wear the teacher hat in my job," says a teacher from Montana. "Now I wear five. I act as mother, social worker, counselor, advocate, and teacher." The teachers consistently referred to the need for quality

"If society truly values children, then society must walk the talk."

support—in child care, social services, health services, housing, crime prevention, parenting. "Bring the services inside the school if necessary," the teachers said. "Make the community and its support system as accountable for children's success as teachers," another stated.

We must rethink the factory paradigm around which the school system was developed. Said one middle school teacher, "Give us fewer students so we can have real relationships with them rather than moving them in and out like products on a factory line. To know our students' abilities and skills, to encourage and guide them to success, to keep expectations and standards high, a teacher must develop a strong relationship with his or her students. Processing them this way is contradictory to solid teaching and learning. We're using a 19th century model in the 21st century. And it doesn't work."

Another issue raised was the way teachers and schools are portrayed in society. "Why is it all we ever see on television is the failures of our schools?" one teacher asked. "There's a lot of good happening in many of our nation's schools."

"What happened to the idea that education was valued and teachers were honored?" another wondered.

"Kids don't want to be teachers anymore," said a math instructor, "because they know how little teachers are valued. It's not just a salary problem. They want jobs that will make people look up to them."

Yet, it is these teachers who say that they are responsible for modeling hard work, critical thinking, high standards, and responsible behavior. "But we can't be doing that in a vacuum," said one. "Society must place new emphasis on education and the value of teachers."

How? Teachers sounded off on this issue. "Give teachers a rightful place on all policy making, fund-appropriating committees." "Support reform efforts which lead to major systemic changes." "Start advertising campaigns that point out what we are doing right for a change."

"Put your money where your mouth is" echoed throughout the Forum hearings. A rhetorical question emerged. "Does an accountant have to have a bake sale if a piece of office equipment is needed?"

The participants agree. Funds need to be allocated for smaller classes, advanced technologies, and teacher preparation. Funding also needs to be equalized. Some teachers were in awe of the resources and advantages other teachers had. Beyond that, the Forum teachers want stable funding, recognizing that excellence requires consistent pubic support. If this nation actually makes children its first priority, "all the resource questions will fall into place," one teacher predicted.

"If society truly values children, then society must walk the talk," said a teacher from New York. Communities across the nation should be actively involved in the support of their public schools, and that means urging politicians to consider children the number one priority of this nation. As a first grade teacher with twenty-five years of experience said, "It's so simple, we miss it. Children ARE our future. Everything we do to help them to achieve is an investment in this nation's security."

Echoed consistently in each break-out session were the time-related aspects of their jobs which teachers felt are sorely underestimated, misunderstood, or unknown.

One Forum participant said "We must change the whole mind-set of what teaching entails. Americans tend to believe that the only legitimate use of a teacher's time is working directly with students. Schools here are always being compared to those in Japan with little mention of the time Japanese teachers have outside of direct teaching. They teach on the average of three classes a day, using the rest of the time to plan, confer with colleagues, work with individual students, and keep up professionally."

Gary Watts, Assistant Executive Director of the National Education Association, told the Forum teachers that "in China they are incredulous that we teach over three hours a day. One-half of their day is professional time." Bella Rosenberg, assistant to the president of the American Federation of Teachers, affirmed this saying, "We have to rethink how we do business."

Rethinking business as it relates to time is exactly what the Forum teachers desire. The issue is quality. Teachers need time to plan effective lessons that actively engage students. They need time to assess students in meaningful ways. Time to talk with and listen to students, many of whom have no support system outside the school. Time to confer with parents. Time to read professional journals. Time to watch other teachers demonstrate teaching strategies. Time to take in-depth classes. Time to engage in professional dialogue. Time to formulate their own questions and collect on-the-job data. Time for reflection—to analyze what worked or didn't work and why. Time for problem solving. Time for community forums. Time to work on programs which will guarantee success for children.

Time to be professional educators.

"People think our days end at three. Not mine", says a first grade teacher. "I am at school until 5, just correcting papers and organizing the class for the next day. Then I go home, work on the next day's plans and make materials, plus try to build in my family time. I keep going because I love this profession, but I am getting closer and closer to finding something else. I can't keep this up."

"We've got to turn around the notion that we have to do everything without being given the time to do it."

Keeping up with current research is another challenge. The Forum teachers are well aware that research findings are challenging traditional ideas about teaching and learning. But educational research is only useful to classroom teachers when they are able to take the time to translate it into useful practice.

The Forum teachers yearn for experiences that build collaboration. They frequently mentioned the need for networks, in their own environments and across the country, with like-minded colleagues. But professional dialogue with like-minded colleagues is often out of the question. Classroom doors are closed, and although three-fourths of the teachers have computers at home, only one-third of them use them to communicate electronically with other teachers.

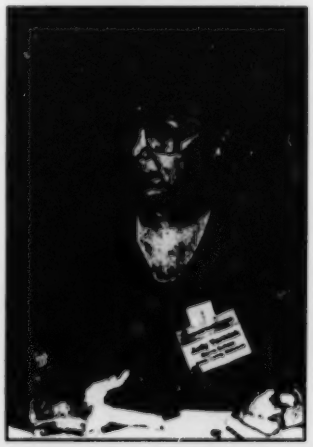
"Single programs, more money, vouchers, new standards won't improve education by themselves," said Gary Watts. "We have to put an end to 12 years of silver-bullet thinking." And as Bella Rosenberg said, "We've got to turn around the notion that we have to do everything without being given the time to do it."

The Forum teachers agreed on the need for overhauling teacher preparation programs and staff development to help teachers meet the needs of their students. They believe teachers should work with colleges of education to prepare teachers and to help shape ongoing professional growth. States a former high school teacher, "No one knows better than the teacher what the task of teaching entails...Classroom teachers should be a vital link in helping universities plan curricula and powerful clinical experiences for preservice teachers."

"No one knows better than the teacher what the task of teaching entails."

Nor should the commitment to teacher development end with preservice training. It should be sustained throughout a teacher's entire career. The Forum teachers were in agreement about the inadequacy of what most schools call "professional development." They recognize that the nature of teaching is changing. Teachers are beginning to see themselves as mentors and facilitators, rather than disseminators of facts. And as one teacher observed, "Teaching as a mentor is definitely more difficult and requires vast staff development." Staff development of a dramatically different kind.

One teacher compared teaching professionals to those in medicine. "Can you imagine asking doctors and nurses and technicians to acquire new skills in one-shot workshops? Teachers? We get to attend workshops after school. If we do take days off to attend workshops, we still have the teaching to do. Classes have to be planned, and then you come back to a mess. Our days ought to include our own continued learning." As another teacher stated, "Professional development is a process, not an event."



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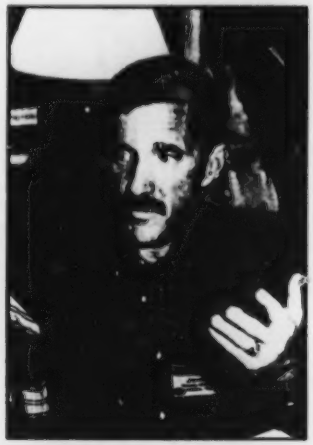
Educational reform is not a one teacher, one school, one district, one state issue. It belongs to the nation. And so does the solution, these teachers say. "We will work for improvement, but we need everyone delivering the message and working with us."

"We have to join with administrators, community leaders, and education professors and team-teach our nation."



"We have to join with administrators, community leaders, and education professors and team-teach the nation."

Societal changes have dramatically reshaped the role of schools and teachers. The result is a need for changing educational practices which require consistently strong leadership and a commitment from all segments of society—a commitment from the media, politicians, community groups, school boards, and administrators to inform people of the need for education reform. Teachers want the nation to know that school improvement is not just for the places that make the evening news. School reform is needed everywhere, so that all students can achieve at the same levels of our international neighbors.

"We have to think bigger than our classrooms," remarked one teacher.

LEARNING FROM THE BEST

"As representatives of the best teachers in the country, you have an obligation to share what makes you good with others."

Lincoln Lewis
Student, Co-Chair, Executive Board
National Association of Student Councils

Fundamental to achieving the National Education Goals is the belief that students can learn at much higher levels. All students. Following their own professional instincts more than any national agenda, the Forum teachers believe this is possible. They may not have had much say in what the National Education Goals should be or in establishing the frameworks for achieving them, but the Forum teachers exemplify the qualities in teaching that are recognized as being essential if students are to meet the high standards envisioned in the Goals.

- They hold high expectations for all students.
- They model the learning and attitudes they want to see in students.
- They seek ways to find and encourage the potential of each student.
- They seek depth—and fight against shallow breadth—in what students learn.
- They encourage students "to take charge" of their learning and, thus, become more responsible and accountable for their own achievement.
- They recognize the need to make connections that will support each student—with parents, with community agencies, and with other community resources.

Expectations

"I treat every student as an adult, and every class as an honors class." This was one teacher's definition of what it means to hold high expectations. Others said it differently, but time and time again the Forum teachers, when asked what they did to attain high achievement with students, described their commitment to expecting the best from their students—and sticking to their standards.

They do not see themselves as the traditional "school marm," dispensing as much discipline as knowledge. They respect students' abilities and prefer the role of "coach," encouraging students to explore subjects with them, but they also demand that quality work be done. "Excellence comes from reaching beyond what we in education have defined as passing," noted a journalism teacher from New Mexico. "If students

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understand that it's okay to do something differently, they will have more incentive to learn, they will even move beyond what I expect of them."

One teacher fights the paradigm that students cannot handle difficult writing assignments. Working with students not expected to be able to handle research and complex writing, he entices them into thinking about research strategies by asking them to analyze favorite cartoons. A history teacher from Massachusetts distributed the report of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) to her students so they would understand why they needed to tackle more difficult schoolwork.

Good teachers, however, know the difference between being a coach and being a buddy. "I distinguish between rigor and friendship," said a science and math teacher from the Bronx. A math teacher from West Virginia described her philosophy of teaching: "Contagion, if possible; coercion, if necessary." One veteran teacher present, with 33 years of teaching experience, believes in using classroom rules and structure to help students deal with the world beyond the classroom. "Kids complain that 'My boss doesn't understand me,' because their boss makes them come in on time," she explained.

High expectations means getting rid of labels. The Forum teachers consistently talked of expecting the same of all students, of creating heterogeneous grouping (even though many of the teachers work with programs for the gifted or honors classes), of recognizing problems facing students but being determined to find ways of engaging all students in high content. "We need to teach everybody with the same high standards," said a language arts teacher from Oregon, most emphatically. "Give me a handful of kids and don't tell me this kid's a dummy and this kid's gifted. I don't care. I don't want them to be limited."

Teacher Power:
SETTING NATIONAL STANDARDS

"As a teacher, I am glad we have come to a point where we listen to each other," said Mary Bicouvaris, a high school history teacher who served on a national advisory board largely responsible for the current push toward nationally set curriculum standards. A teacher for 29 years, she taught, from day one, without a compass, always wondering "Am I teaching right? Am I saying the right thing?" She would pretend a group of scholars was sitting at the back of the room, listening to her teach. Now, she is actually working with scholars to develop standards for the history curriculum, and never again will new teachers lack a yardstick for achievement, she predicted.

Like the process in federally funded activities in all major subject disciplines, those developing history standards will rely on classroom teachers to flesh out the performances expected—how good is good enough. The content standards are outcomes, explained Gloria Sesso, a high school history teacher from New York. It will be up to teachers to set the expectations about mastery and select the strategies for how to help all students achieve the mastery levels. Get involved, she advised, especially on demanding that assessments be as rich as the standards.

Teachers also are setting the expectations in the New Standards Project, a foundation-funded effort that includes states or districts representing almost half of the K-12 students in the country. Starting with performance standards in literacy and math, the New Standards Project has involved hundreds of teachers in developing scoring rubrics. Experts watched teachers during the scoring process, according to a sixth-grade teacher from Vermont, "and concluded that teachers are very reliable scorers. They have the same standards."

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Teachers as Models

Teachers are up against a tough pair of competitors—Beavis and Butt-head. Such nonachieving models added to the simplistic and many times illogical thinking of television sitcoms are the stuff of students' lives these days, the Forum teachers acknowledged. But they were ready to fight such flim-flam with their fire. "We have to be strong and not give up our role as models for kids," said a biology teacher from Baltimore.

But what does being a role model mean? Setting high personal standards is one characteristic. A teacher who does that, said a chemistry teacher from Oklahoma, "can ask more from students." Teachers must model hard work, and demand it of students. One teacher even asks students to critique her own writing. Good teachers let their role modeling hang out—before and after school, on lunch hours. A Massachusetts middle-grades teacher gives students his personal card with his telephone number. "Use it if you have questions," he tells them.

In one school where teachers plan and teach as teams, students observe the teachers arguing about important issues and working out their ideas. That's good for them to see, said one of the team members. It is important to say: "I don't know, let's find out."

Often it is the physical environment which teachers create that sets the context for students. "I model my own love of reading," reported an English teacher from Montana. "I fill my room with books and provide lots of opportunities in class to read."

Teacher Power:
MODELING FOR EACH OTHER

Dina Portney looked at her teaching career and the climate of her Philadelphia high school and decided she was in a wasteland. That year—1986—was a critical juncture for her, a time when she had to decide if she could continue to put up with huge classes, top-down directives, no time to meet with other teachers, and a curriculum so standardized she could only use basal readers, not literature. Searching widely for help, she stumbled into a summer writing institute which was really about re-envisioning her classroom. "This was probably the only place where teachers across grade levels were talking with each other about teaching and learning," she recalled. The summer institutes, part of the National Writing Project, help teachers train each other. In Philadelphia, they have grown into support groups where, Portney said, "we are able to discuss strategies for altering school culture and district policies." Teachers have become empowered, she added, and with "their collective strength, their ability to impact on policy has increased."

In Gorham, Maine, similar empowerment has come about because teachers are free to do research. Through outside funding, every school has a Teacher-Scholar who helps teachers redefine their roles, reflect on their work, find resources they need. Says Sally Lockland, a current Teacher-Scholar, "Everyone is expected to have strengths and to contribute as we build a collective vision."

Perhaps one of the most intensive examples of teachers modeling for each other is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), whose 63-member board is composed primarily of teachers. Its rigorous standards will allow experienced teachers to be certified as excellent and to become leaders on reform. The process of developing the certification criteria and pilot tests already reveals the potential of the assessment for helping teachers become models—for students and each other. It promotes teachers collaborating with each other, according to teachers involved with NBPTS.

Seeing Students as Individuals

If there is one consistent approach to teaching among the Forum teachers, it is being flexible. One gets the feeling that instead of being tied to habits of teaching, anything that will encourage students to dig more deeply into content and find success will be tried. "My theory is that you don't learn things brand new, you build on what you already know," said a science teacher from Ohio. "You teach at an individual level, finding out where they are starting from and building from there. But it's time consuming, and you have to set high standards."

The Forum teachers also stressed the importance of using materials and resources that reflect the diversity of American society, if we hope to engage *all* students. "It is important to teach students different perspectives on an issue," emphasized an elementary/middle school teacher from Minnesota. "A child's culture needs to be enhanced through materials and resources used in the classroom. I tell my students, 'When you know your history, you know your greatness'."

Teachers talked about studying the learning styles of students and designing strategies that would reach them—videotaping to supplement writing, cooperative grouping, including a painting in a final project, assigning students to teach a unit to younger students, finding forums for students to exhibit their work outside of school, or teaching students self-assessment by using portfolios. A social studies teacher distributes a learning styles inventory to students at the beginning of a class, and both teacher and students analyze their own styles. "This helps them believe in themselves and learn where they could move ahead," he said. A private school teacher from Maryland is "interested in the genius in all of my students. I want them to discover the way they learn best."

These are not textbook-tied teachers. In fact, many talked about how hard they try to avoid using textbooks as the center of instruction. By avoiding the textbook as the primary source, a language arts teacher noted that she now can "design a whole lesson around the objectives I want, not what the textbook wants." Using a variety of resources and experiential learning, the Forum teachers tie classroom learning to the lives of students and give a specific message to their students—you will need these skills in the future. While media and peer pressure values challenge the values of the classroom, "it is still the teacher's responsibility to make the material in class relevant to life and hold students' interests," an Oklahoma teacher stressed.

Teacher Power:
DESIGNING A STUDENT-CENTERED SCHOOL

Imagine a school with no separate subject disciplines, no grades, no credits, no Carnegie units. This is University Heights High School on the campus of Bronx Community College, an alternative school for 400 students.

Students at University Heights work in integrated, project-based learning teams. In order to graduate, they are required to participate in seven different Roundtables, each one made up of parents, teachers, college professors, and students. The objective of the Roundtables is to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their mastery and skills in all disciplines.

According to one of the teachers, Augusto Andres, students reflect on their portfolio work, asking: "What did I do and how did I do it?" "What did I learn and why is it valuable to me?" "What can I do better in the future?" Students used to be concerned about graduating on time, he added. Now, "they talk about whether they are ready to graduate."

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Going for Depth

The goal for Forum teachers is to help students develop in-depth knowledge of each subject and understanding of content across disciplines with rigor at the heart of the process.

The introduction of the International Baccalaureate at a Missouri high school forced all of the faculty to change the way they taught, a history teacher reported. Essay tests and primary sources are now typical strategies throughout the school. Further, a science teacher from Florida found the international comparisons helpful because they helped him set standards and let his students know what they, too, could be capable of learning.

Science teachers reported using cooperative learning as a way to help students delve into the scientific process, supplemented by lots of projects, experiments, and problem solving. "Everybody has to participate, and kids put pressure on each other to contribute," said one teacher. Forum teachers also are open to nontraditional ways of organizing classrooms, such as cross-age grouping or staying with one group of students for multiple years.

They also often rely on competitions to deepen student knowledge, encouraging and sometimes requiring students to enter academic contests but also emphasizing that it is the process that is important, not winning.

Rather than fret about covering the material, Forum teachers seek time for going deeper into subjects. As one teacher observed, "we need to take advantage of opportunities that arise spontaneously to cover material more in depth." This requires students to have access to quality resources—and teachers to have flexibility in using them. "It is important to have the freedom to use resources appropriately," commented one teacher.

For a growing number of classrooms among the Forum teachers, this means using technology creatively, especially to connect students with other students and resources beyond school walls (in fact, they are more apt to value telecommunications for their students before they consider it as a resource for themselves). There seems to be no reluctance

Teacher Power:
OWNING AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Vermonters are known for their independence, and the state's teachers fully demonstrated this by rejecting outside models for a state assessment system. Wary of typical competency tests that set minimums, they decided to design their own assessment system that would make students and teachers stretch. Thus evolved Vermont's portfolio assessments, now a model for teachers, researchers, and policymakers around the country. The state's plan "is child-centered, authentic, and driven by the needs of Vermont," said Ellen Thompson, a writing portfolio assessment network leader.

Teachers worked a full year (1989-90) to sketch the outlines of the program and have been filling them in ever since with more and more reliable rubrics and scoring. An on-demand writing assignment is being used as a check on the portfolio assessments, but it probably will be phased out. The scoring became a professional meeting place for teachers. "I would put pieces of writing on the overhead and hand out bundles of writing to discuss with teachers," said Thompson. "They would score and discuss; they often didn't agree on scores, so that produced more discussion." During this process, teachers gradually developed an ability to understand and agree upon a definition of best work by students.

The portfolios have an important side benefit, Thompson added. "We spend more time presenting portfolios to parents than we ever did handing out report cards. We let parents know what we think is important."

on the part of the Forum teachers to integrate technology into their instruction, and their comments make it obvious they see computers and other advanced technologies as important tools within classrooms, not as add-ons or to use with activities that happen in labs down the hall a few hours a week.

Letting Students Take Charge

The Forum teachers respect students as learners. From the early grades on, they trust students to assume responsibility for their learning and are committed to finding ways to allow them to do so. For example, the frequent mention of using portfolios and portfolio assessment is an indicator of the teachers' interest in helping students judge their own work. "Living report cards," is how one teacher described portfolios.

Their strategies go much further, however, reflecting deeply held views that students are capable of directing their own learning and accepting teachers as learners themselves. A sixth-grade teacher from Colorado communicates her expectations to her students clearly, then enrolls them "as co-curriculum writers and co-assessors," even though many of her colleagues at the school cannot "trust kids to teach themselves."

A junior high school teacher asks whole classes to set academic and behavior goals for themselves every six weeks. At the end of the period, students review and rate their success. A teacher from an elementary school in Rhode Island carries out the same philosophy: "I set the agenda of the classroom with my students." A Maine teacher sets high standards by becoming a "powerful listener," asking permission to speak in class and letting students take responsibility for the discussions. A South Dakota teacher asks students to monitor their behavior in groups, reflecting on whether or not they have been facilita-

Teacher Power:
LETTING STUDENTS SOAR THROUGH THE NETWORKS

Like many technology projects in their infancy, the Bread Loaf School of English "was so low-tech that hair dryers would blow out the electrical system," according to Bill Wright of Middlebury College, which runs the summer graduate school.

Those days are far behind, and the electronic BreadNet, unlike many telecommunications networks, is connecting students more than teachers. Pulling far-flung rural settings together, it provides an online writing workshop for students; online discussion involving students and guests, such as staff from Vice President Gore's office; and World Class, an international class for students based on reading of a common text.

For a recent World Class activity, students first made up essays that introduced themselves. "These were very poignant," said Patricia McGonegal of Vermont. "This is a real slice of life for the kids to see. We got very powerful poems from kids all over the world." In some schools on BreadNet, students run the network and are graded on their management.

Students are natural entrepreneurs. At North High School in Wichita, Kansas, teachers mine this interest to engage students turned off by traditional teaching. Students receive $50 to buy a product from a wholesaler and learn how to resell the product to make a profit. As budding businesspeople, they negotiate, read the Wall Street Journal, write business plans, and even write formal business memos when they want to be excused from a class. One of 11 sites around the country for the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, North High seeks businesses to fund individual students. One business helps students patent and produce good inventions, another gives them stock in the company.

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tors and collaborators. They are tougher on themselves than she would be, she reports. A math teacher from Idaho assigns students to do the teaching under the supervision of a substitute when he is away from the school. An elementary teacher conducts brainstorming sessions with her students that allow them to show her what they have learned. Many of the Forum teachers praise peer tutoring, especially of younger students, as a way for their students to assume responsibility for learning.

These are anecdotal examples of practice, but added up, they represent a wholesome view of student behavior. The Forum teachers truly accept students as capable of taking charge.

Making Connections

Many of the Forum teachers are not comfortable with accepting roles in the classroom that once were the province of families or community institutions, but they also see no choice but to recognize the barriers their students face—and do something about them. Burdened by large classes and no extra time to give to students desperately needing attention, the teachers are frustrated, concerned, and asking other institutions to get their acts together.

Most important, however, they don't allow problems to become excuses. Too often, some said, students are accepted as victims, rather than required to accept responsibility and to take control of their learning. But the Forum teachers do not leave problems at the feet of their students, realizing that today's youngsters do not have the supports available to previous generations—and do have distractions created by family life and societal trends.

The Forum teachers believe in drawing from the strengths of families. Instead of dwelling on the lack of parental support, they try to find ways of encouraging it. Few talked about typical parent involvement activities—the newsletters, the regularly scheduled conferences. Most go beyond such strategies, seeking to empower parents in order to empower students. "The issue of self-esteem for a child is really self-esteem for the family," said a teacher from a low-income school in California. Instead of asking parents to come, she takes the initiative, with a focus on constantly helping parents understand that their children are capable of much higher achievement. For a teacher in an Alaskan village only a few miles from the Bering Sea, self-esteem for both students and parents is linked to their culture. He focuses on what is "basic stuff" in his context—"traditional values that our ancestors used to solve problems."

A New Jersey high school English teacher assigns students to discuss their reading with their parents and report to the class on the discussions. Parents also come to the class to read and participate. "This helps parents to become supportive rather than critical," she said. A Baltimore elementary teacher uses parent and family journals to reach reluctant parents. She sends the journals home to parents every few weeks, asking questions that need responses from them. Those who don't want to write can reply through tapes. "I just want some conversations with them," she said. "Some write poems, some write essays. I learn a lot, and the journals are something parents can look at over time and share with their children."

Still, teachers are realistic, knowing that by high school some students cannot depend upon strong family support. With such students, one high school teacher does not emphasize parent involvement as a necessity but, instead, seeks to help the student find his or her identity. "You have to give support to a kid when the traditional ones aren't there," she added.

The Forum teachers welcome the presence of community services in the schools, and some endorsed the idea of school facilities being open early and late into the evening, serving families as well as students. Many teachers infuse their classrooms with community and business resources. Rather than just providing monetary support, they want this involvement to be a real partnership that focuses on helping students link their studies with future occupations.

High school teachers must compete with student jobs for time, but instead of just complaining, one teacher marched to the source—the business community—and is holding it accountable. "I told them they need to take some responsibility because they set the work schedules," she said. Businesspeople and educators should sit down at the table together, she advised, and talk about why Johnny's 40-hour work week prevents him from even staying awake in class, much less performing well academically.

The overwhelming changes outside of schools unnerve many teachers, but those at the Forum recognize that these changes cannot be ignored—they must be addressed. But it is quite clear to the Forum teachers that schools cannot address these changes alone.

Teacher Power:
CROSSING THE PRIVATE LINE

Finding colleagues and support for change may be almost next door, although the doorways may be very different from each other. Heathwood Hall is a private K-12 school in Columbia, S.C., which joined the Coalition of Essential Schools in 1987 and is about to graduate its first senior class under a system of mastery, not Carnegie units. The faculty worked through all of the challenges of the reforms—rewriting its curriculum and extending the school day. The principles of the Coalition worked for this independent school. Why not share their expertise with interested public schools?

With a grant from the state, Heathwood Hall held a "graduate course" in the Coalition for principals and teachers of 15 public schools in the area. Each public school also received funds for staff development, aided by teachers from Heathwood Hall.

The private school did not make money on the project, according to Jane Ness, principal of its middle school, "but we've been enriched because we are part of a larger network of teachers." For Sandy Nay, a teacher at one of the public schools, the collaboration spelled greater success for her students. "They are more active learners, they take more responsibility for their own learning." While Nay was skeptical at first because of Heathwood Hall's idyllic setting, she acknowledged that, "we are a better school because of our branching out." Success is best when it is shared.

Making Teacher Leadership Count

The teachers at the Goals 2000 Teacher Forum know their craft well. They recognize excellent teaching, spot successful learning at high levels, recognize the road blocks in front of them and their students, are willing to share what they know with colleagues, and want more than anything to continue to be good teachers. But they are also well aware that being a good teacher has meant the need for them to overcome a lot of obstacles. These obstacles are often the result of local, state and federal policy initiatives that do not incorporate the crucial voice of teachers.

It is a tragic loss for American education that these teachers, with so much to give, also believe they are not taken seriously. If they were, they would be actively involved in policy making at all levels. Their knowledge of best practices would be informing decisions that are reshaping much of what they do professionally. More to the point, they would be making those decisions. "I am in a state of complete readiness and raring to go," commented a teacher at the conclusion of the Forum expressing in a few words the sentiment of participants as a whole. Says Tracey Bailey, 1993 National Teacher of the Year, "We should be using our innovative teachers... Let teachers play a leadership role in bringing about change in the schools."

The conversation that began at the Forum should launch many similar conversations between teachers and policy makers in localities and states, as well as at the national level. Conversations that focus on the changes that need to take place in our schools and communities if we are to enable all students to meet high levels of academic achievement.

Real Teacher Power:
BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY

The South Carolina Teacher Forum is opening doors for teachers to become partners in education reform. Started in 1986 by a former state and national teacher of the year, it is an active organization of exemplary teachers. Meeting at least once a year amid an ambiance due professionals, the forum develops leadership, provides recognition, and gives teachers a voice in setting the agenda for education reform. This is a voluntary and non-partisan effort, not tied to any other group. The South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment takes care of logistics, and local school districts provide support for their teachers.

Each year the forum takes up an issue of importance to classroom teaching and produces a report for administrators and policy makers. In past years the forum has pinpointed priorities for state policy makers, made recommendations on teacher preparation, prepared resources on testing issues, and collaborated with business leaders on a report to the legislature. Site-based management came about, forum supporters believe, because teachers had gained respect for their leadership through the forum. And they are now being sought for advice by policy makers—instead of waiting on the sidelines.

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THE POWER OF CONNECTION

When the Forum teachers left Washington, D.C., they left changed. Most trekked back to their states filled, not with a stack of notes and hand-outs, but with a confirmation of the universality of their experiences in the classroom.

One suggested, "It didn't matter whether I talked to a German instructor from Alabama, a sixth grade teacher in New York's Harlem, or a private prep school math teacher. Our understanding of the problems and what must be done to solve them is consistent. There is such power in this connection."

The next step is utilizing that power to make change. It won't be easy. "We have a 100-year history of telling teachers that they don't have a philosophy—that they just need to follow the central office," said Gary Watts of the National Education Association. "They can't just wake up one morning and be totally different."

Nor can the right reforms take hold unless teachers work together," said Bella Rosenberg of the American Federation of Teachers. She refuted the criticism that schools have been unresponsive to students' needs. "They have been too responsive," she said, and "thus diluted their central purpose—to provide access to high content learning."

The Forum teachers are well aware of the challenge that lies ahead. In order to achieve national reform, they must go public with some of their own experiences and expertise. But they must have support from the top down and the circle around.

By appointing former National Teacher of the Year, Terry Dozier, as the first resident teacher-adviser, Secretary Richard Riley has made it clear that teachers will be a significant part of the process of educational reform. As he said at the opening of the Goals 2000 Teacher Forum, we need to listen to teachers so that "those of us who are not teachers keep our feet on the ground when we talk about school reform." Likewise, all politicians, policy makers, and community leaders must include teachers in decisions that affect what goes on in schools.

Terry Dozier stressed the need for teacher leadership saying, "Good teachers must lead because they can't tolerate mediocrity for their students, themselves, or this nation. They must lead because they have a vision for America. But, teacher leadership needs support and dignity; teacher leadership needs to have its voice heard."

The voice of these outstanding teachers who believe in themselves and in their experience resounds in this document. It is a song of excellence, and they sing it for children.

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* Representing a private school organization

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